

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2387

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMEMBASSY RABAT

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DEPARTMENT PASS USDOC FOR SAD: JACOBSON AND CAGNE:JENSEN

RABAT ALSO FOR AGATT

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TAGS: EAGR, BEXP, TS

SUBJECT: GENERAL REVIEW OF AGRICULTURAL LAND DEVELOPMENT
PROJECTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: IN SUPPORT OF UPCOMING TECHNICAL
SALES SEMINAR ON AGRICULTURAL LAND DEVELOPMENT, EMBASSY REVIEWS IN
PRESENT CABLE ON-GOING AND PLANNED MAJOR AGRICULTURAL
PROJECTS AS WELL AS PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS WHICH MUST BE
ADDRESSED IN TUNISIAN CONTEXT. DESPITE HEAVY EMPHASIS
ON AGRICULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE SINCE INDEPENDENCE (1956),
TOTAL GOT INVESTMENT IN THIS AREA FOR FIFTH PLAN
(1977-1981) WILL STILL EXCEED \$250 MILLION. END SUMMARY

2. MAJOR PROJECTS BY EXECUTING AGENCIES:

A) OFFICE DE MISE EN VALEUR DE LA VALLEE DE LA MAJERDA
(OMVVM): MEJERDA VALLEY DEVELOPMENT OFFICES IS OLDEST AND LARGES
LAND DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION IN TUNISIA, HAVING
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BEEN ESTABLISHED IN 1958 TO MANAGE IRRIGATED PERIMETERS

FED BY MAJERDA REIVER IN FERTILE NORTH OF COUNTRY.
CURRENT PROJECTS INCLUDE: NEW IRRIGATED PERIMETER
(12,000 HECTARES) BEGUN IN 1971, ENDING 1977 (FOREIGN
EXCHANGE COST \$12 MILLION FINANCED BY KUWAIT FUND);
REHABILITATION OF 20,000 HECTARES EXISTING PERIMETERS
BEGUN 1974, PROJECT COMPLETION 1981 (FOREIGN EXCHANGE
COST \$15 MILLION, FINANCED BY IBRD). NEW SIDI SALEM
DAM (UNDER CONSTRUCTION) WILL PROVIDE IRRIGATION FOR
ADDITIONAL 25,000 HECTARE PERIMETER IN VICINITY
DAM, PLUS 7,000 HECTARES ON CAP BON, WATER DELIVERED
BY MEJERDA-CAP BON CANAL (TO BE FINANCED BY PEOPLES'
REPUBLIC OF CHINA). OMVVM WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE
PERIMETERS, AND MAY BE INTERESTED IN TURN-KEY
PROJECTS, TECHNIQUE NOT PREVIOUSLY USED IN TUNISIAN
AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT. OMVVM EMPLOYS 1000
INCLUDING AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE FOR ITS
PERIMETERS. SERVICES INCLUDE WATER USE MANAGEMENT,
SERVICING OF IRRIGATION EQUIPMENT, AGRICULTURAL
RESEARCH STATION, POULTRY AND LIVESTOCK ACTIVITIES.

B) OFFICE DE MISE EN VALEUR DE JENDOUBA (OMVJ):
NEW OFFICE TO MANAGE 20,000 HECTARE PERIMETER TO BE
CREATED USING WATER FROM RECENTLY INAUGURATED BOU
HEURTMA DAM. HIGH PRESSURE SPRINKLE IRRIGATION
SYSTEM ENVISAGED. DAM AND IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE
FINANCED IN CONJUNCTION WITH WEST GERMAN AID PROGRAM.
PROPOSED BREAKDOWN BY CROPS: 8,000 HECTARES SUGAR
BEETS, 5,000 HECTARES IRRIGATED CEREALS, 2,000 HECTARES
VEGETABLES, 5,000 HECTARES CITRUS AND OTHER FRUITS,
INCLUDING TABLE OLIVES.

C) SOCIETE NATIONALE DE MISE EN VALEUR DU SUD (SONMIVAS):
GOVERNMENT COMPANY CHARGED WITH AGRICULTURAL LAND
DEVELOPMENT IN ARID SOUTH, CURRENTLY CONCENTRATING
ON 60,000 HECTARE SITE NEAR MEDENINE IN COOPERATION
WITH THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT. PROJECT INCLUDES -

1) PROGRAM TO CAPTURE RUN-OFF WATER IN BASINS, TO
CHANNEL THREE SEASONAL RIVERS (OUEDS) IN MEDENINE AREA
AND TO DEVELOP SPRINGS; 2) ESTABLISHMENT OF FRUIT
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TREE AND FOREST PLANTATIONS; 3) INTENSIVE LIVESTOCK
FEEDING AND EXPANDED PASTURE LANDS. WATER IN THIS
AREA IS GENERALLY SALINE WITH AS MUCH AS 7,000 PARTS PER
MILLION (PPM). SONMIVAS PREFERS INTEGRATED SOCIO/
ECONOMIC/AGRICULTURE ORIENTATION WHICH WILL HOLD
POPULATION IN AREA BY PROVIDING WORK AND ALLIED SOCIAL
NEEDS (SCHOOLS, HOSPITAL/CLINICS/ROAD, HOUSING).

D) ARID LAND INSTITUTE:

NEWLY FOUNDED GOVERNMENT AGENCY UNDER MINISTRY OF
AGRICULTURE WITH MANDATE TO DEVELOP PROJECT
PROPOSAL FOR DEVELOPMENT OF 100,000 HECTARES ARID
REGION INTO USEFUL RANGELAND. INSTITUTE EXPECTS
MAJOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM UN ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM.
INSTITUTE ALSO CHARGED WITH ADAPTION OF LAND DEVELOPMENT
AND USE TECHNIQUES TO SPECIFIC ARID AREAS IN TUNISIA,
INCLUDING COASTAL OASES WITH HIGH SALINITY WATER AND
SALINE SOILS AND INLAND OASES WITH HIGHER QUALITY
WATER. IN LATTER OASES, IMPROVED CULTIVATION OF
DATE PALMS AND VEGETABLES IS OF SPECIAL INTEREST.

E) OFFICE DE MISE EN VALEUR DE NEBHANA (OMIVAN):

STATE AGENCY DEVELOPING SMALL (5,000 HECTARES)
NEBHANA PERIMETER NEAR SOUSSE. PROJECT AT ADVANCED
STAGE BUT FACING PROBLEMS DUE HIGH COST OF WATER;
NEEDS IRRIGATION SYSTEM WITH MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY
WATER USE.

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F) KAIROUAN PLAIN:

PLANNED SIDI SAAD DAM, FINANCED BY CANADIAN AID PROGRAM, WILL IRRIGATE 4,000 HECTARES IN KAIROUAN AREA IN CENTRAL TUNISIA, WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF A 1,000 HECTARE EXTENSION. AREA PRESENTLY SEMI-ARID WITH PERIODIC DESTRUCTIVE FLOODING. STATE OFFICE WILL PROBABLY BE CREATED IN NEAR FUTURE TO MANAGE PERIMETER DEVELOPMENT.

3. PRINCIPAL TECHNICAL PROBLEMS IN TUNISIAN LAND DEVELOPMENT:

A) WATER SCARCITY: ONLY IN CERTAIN AREAS OF NORTH IS WATER REASONABLY ABUNDANT, WBTHOR FOR RAIN-FED OR IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE. THERE IS NO RAINFALL DURING SUMMER MONTHS. ON COUNTRY-WIDE BASIS, TUNISIA IS WATER DEFICIT AREA ACCORDING TO IBRD STUDIES.
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EMPHASIS MUST BE PLACED ON WATER USE MAXIMIZATION IN DESIGN OF IRRIGATION SYSTEMS. OVERHEAD SPRINKLER SYSTEMS ARE FEASIBLE IN ONLY FEW AREAS. ALL TUNISIANS CONTACTED EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEM.

B) WATERSHED MANAGEMENT: DEFORESTATION AND EXCESSIVE GRAZING HAVE CREATED SERIOUS EROSION PROBLEM WHICH LEADS TO HEAVY SILTING OF DAMS, SOIL IMPOVRISHMENT, AND RELATED WATERSHED PROBLEMS. PROGRAMS OF REFORESTATION, MANAGED GRAZING AND GENERAL MANAGEMENT OF AREAS BEHIND DAMS OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE TO EFFICIENT USE OF IRRIGATION WATER.

C) SALINITY: WATER SALINITY PROBLEM EXTENDS THROUGHOUT TUNISIA TO GREATER OR LESSER DEGREE. EVEN IN MEJERDA VALLEY, THE WATER RANGES IN SALINITY FROM ABOUT 400 PPM TO 2,000 PPM, DEPENDING UPON THE STREAM FLOW. IN COASTAL OASES, SALINITY REACHES 7,000 PPM. DEVELOPMENTS IN USE OF BRACKISH WATER OF PRIME IMPORTANCE IN TUNISIAN AGRICULTURE. CORROSION RESISTANT PIPE WOULD ADD LIFE TO ARTISAN WELLS.

D) DRAINAGE: SANDY SOILS IN SOUTH AND HEAVY CLAY SOILS IN NORTH CAUSE DIFFERENT BUT EQUALLY SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR LAND DEVELOPMENT, AND EMPHASIZE NEED FOR SPECIFIC PROGRAM FOR EACH AREA OF COUNTRY.

4. AGRICULTURAL LAND ORGANIZATION: MAJORITY OF AGRICULTURAL LAND IS EXPLOITED IN LARGE UNITS (OVER 100

HECTARES) IN EITHER PRIVATE, COOPERATIVE OR STATE FARMS. STATE-OWNED LAND IS MANAGED BY THE OFFICE DES TERRES DOMINALES (OTD), WHICH IS UNDERGOING A MAJOR REORGANIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION TO MAKE IT A MORE EFFICIENT DIRECT MANAGER OF STATE FARMS. MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE NOW IN PROCESS OF STUDYING LAND USE TO DETERMINE WHETHER PRIVATIZATION OF STATE LAND LEADS TO EFFICIENT LAND USE. IN JENDOUBA AREA, PLAN IS THAT OMVJ DEVELOP INFRASTRUCTURE OF PERIMETER AND RETURN LAND TO OWNER (STATE, COOP OR PRIVATE) TO EXPLOIT. IF PRIVATE OWNER DOES NOT PROPERLY UTILIZE IRRIGATION SYSTEM, HE WILL BE MOVED TO NON-IRRIGATED AREA AND HIS UNCLASSIFIED

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LAND WILL BE TAKEN OVER BY OTD.

5. COMMENT: U.S. COMPANIES INTERESTED IN EXPORT OF GOODS AND SERVICES FOR AGRICULTURAL LAND DEVELOPMENT IN TUNISIA SHOULD CONCENTRATE THEIR ATTENTION ON THE OFFICES DE MISE EN VALEUR AND ON THE DIVISION OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE RESPONSIBLE FOR OVERALL WATER AND LAND USE, E.G. OFFICES OF LIVESTOCK, HYDRAULICS, RURAL ENGINEERING, EXTENSION SERVICE, AGRICULTURAL STUDIES CENTER, AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER. NATIONAL FARMERS UNION IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT LINK BETWEEN EQUIPMENT AND SYSTEMS USERS AND DESIGNERS. POSSIBILITIES ALSO EXIST FOR AGRI-BUSINESS INVESTMENT IN TUNISIA, SEE 75 TUNIS 6421 AND JANUARY ISSUE OPIC PUBLICATION, TOPICS. KING

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